

SOUL SURFING:  
DIVING FOR LOST TREASURES

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Doctor of Ministry

by  
Dan Gibson  
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This professional project completed by

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has been presented to and accepted by  
the Faculty of the Claremont School of Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

### SOUL SURFING: DIVING FOR LOST TREASURES

by

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My project, entitled “Soul Surfing: Diving for Lost Treasures”, seeks to get under the surface of what separates us from our God, our true selves, and others. Such barriers are identified as areas of “control” that can take on various forms, hold us captive, and result in harmful and even deadly consequences. For this project, the problem of “addiction”, as it is widely understood, is the main area of focus. Two populations, the church and the twelve-step community, were invited to “dive beneath” the general myths and misconceptions they hold about this issue, and each other, in order to bring about greater understanding and support of the other. Area churches and the twelve-step groups that actually meet on the same grounds were specifically targeted. An event was organized to be the center of convergence for information sharing, interaction, and the collection of data. The presentation at the event was based on the source material contained in these chapters. This included such things as education in human development, a theological and spiritual basis, and a basic history and the general objective of these two communities. In circling back, the feedback collected from the event was interleaved into the corresponding sections of this text. This included such things as the responses from the small group discussion and evaluation portions. “Soul Surfing Guides” (made up from both groups) were involved in the planning, facilitation and assessment of this event. In the closing chapter, consideration was given to the value of spiritual practices that can help us to better access and utilize the “lost treasure” that lies within each of us. Because the twelve-step program

is anonymous by nature, it presented limitations as to how I gathered and presented my data. Since one cannot track individuals (their historic activity/longevity, etc.), there are no pie charts or bar graphs. Still, I believe this project was successful in bringing these two groups together in what I feel was a creative and fun way that included their input at every stage; provided a safe environment for conversation with a focus on clarification and learning; brought forth fresh insight; and furthered a relationship that will bless them both and the communities they serve.

## **Acknowledgements**

To all the soul surfers out there who paddled my way and were willing to peer beneath the surface and recognize the good within me.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 – What Are We Drowning From? .....	6
Chapter 2 – Catching the Wave of the Spirit .....	14
Chapter 3 – Splitting the Peak .....	20
Chapter 4 – Channel Surfing – Switching Over to the Event.....	32
Chapter 5 – Getting Out of the Shallows – Go Deep .....	40
Chapter 6 – Unpacking the Treasure Chest: Event Evaluations .....	51
Epilogue – Thy Kokomo Come .....	58
Appendix A .....	61
Appendix B .....	62
Appendix C .....	63
Appendix D.....	64
Appendix E .....	65
Appendix F .....	66
Appendix G .....	67
Appendix H .....	68
Appendix I .....	69
Appendix J .....	70
Bibliography .....	71

## Introduction

The South Bay is my home. It is here where I live, worship, work, and play. I am a certified Chemical Dependency Counselor employed at The Thelma McMillen Treatment Center in Torrance, California. As well as having its share of alcohol and drug problems, the South Bay is an avid surfing community, home of such renowned locales such as Redondo, Hermosa and Manhattan Beach. I have worked with both youth and adult surfers who are clients, as well as some counselors at the treatment center where I serve.

I am also an ordained ELCA pastor who has served, and remains active in, the South Bay area. Several of my clergy colleagues host various twelve-step meetings at their churches. I came to notice, while they seem genuinely appreciative of the service each one renders to the community, how little they know about each other. Indeed, according to a national study, it was shown that 94% clergy surveyed consider substance abuse to be an important issue but 12% of them report they had any education in this area.<sup>1</sup>

Like my beloved classic surf band, who also hail from the South Bay and joins us on this safari, *soul surfing* endeavors to blend the voices of our local congregational and recovery communities in effort to bring about greater harmony. It is a song about love, loss, and reconciliation. It runs deep, but, at times, can be lighthearted. The format of this study follows the same order as the event, weaving in stories and essential findings at their corresponding sections, which almost gives a *flashback* effect. As you dive into the pages that follow, I hope you are able to discover a special treasure just for you.

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<sup>1</sup> *So Help Me God: Substance Abuse, Religion and Spirituality*, Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University, November 2001, accessed September 22, 2019, <https://www.datafiles.samhsa.gov/study-publication/so-help-me-god-substance-abuse-religion-and-spirituality-nid15577>.



## **Stages**

There are three stages to this project: The Pre-Event Stage, The Event Stage and The Post-Event Stage. At each stage I had the assistance of representatives from each group, otherwise known as “The Soul Surfing Guides”.

### **The Pre-Event Stage**

The Pre-Event Stage was the planning where the Soul Surfing Guides and I reviewed the premise of this project, and together, helped to shape the overall content, timeline, strategy and criteria for analysis in order to obtain certain data. For the sake of practicality and anonymity issues, these pre-gatherings with the twelve-step leaders and church leaders took place separately.

### **The Event Stage**

The Event-Stage was the actual presentation of the event. This included the guides helping to provide hospitality, registration, preparation of materials, etc. They also served in various leadership capacities, from facilitating small group discussions and crowd management (general oversight) throughout the entire evening.

### **The Post-Event Stage**

The Post-Event Stage would call us together again to evaluate the event based on the data collected from it, discuss these findings, including our own impressions, and consider what this newfound relationship might look like in the future. Several personal/separate conversations I had with participants are also included in this study.

## **Scope**

There are three main areas to this project: Education, Communication, and Partnership.

## **Education**

For the event portion, I provided information on basic human development, addiction, recovery, spirituality, a brief, comparative history of the church and the twelve-step movement, a summary and brief explication of the twelve-steps, and closed with the challenge to review our existing spiritual practices before seeking new ones. In addition, I used personal illustrations to highlight various facets of this project.

## **Communication**

Communication took place in all stages of this project. During the event stage, in particular, there was a segment when participants were broken up into small groups so they could become better acquainted with each other and the groups they represented. These groups were also given discussion questions that helped navigate and deepen these conversations.

## **Partnership**

Throughout this process, leaders from the church established a relationship with leaders from the twelve-step community, several of whom share the same facility. This also included leaders from local treatment centers, social service organizations, and other, more untraditional recovery organizations, most of which were there in attendance at the event.

## What is a Soul Surfer?

According to Southern California surf folklore, a *soul surfer* is one who lives and surfs by the grace of the great mother ocean. These venturesome individuals experience the joy of the ride; the crushing of the wipe out; and the striving for better balance on their board. It is less about a sporting competition and more to do with sharpening their craft by practice. The soul surfer is aware and cooperates with others who share the waves. Together, they seek to protect and preserve the oceans and beaches.

This project takes soul surfing to a whole new level – deep beneath the surface. Instead of the waves out on the ocean, we will ride the currents that flows into the depths of our soul. We will review the *wipe-outs* of our lives and what led to that in order to bring about better balance on *our boards*. At the *peak*, we will explore how the strengthening of our relationship with those who share the waves contributes to our collective welfare, and all who inhabit the great ocean of life.

And so with that as introduction ... Let's go surfin'!

“Search me O God, and know my heart, test me and know my concerns.” Psalm 139:23, BSB.

## Chapter 1

### What Are We Drowning From?

#### Dennis Wilson: A Soul Surfer

Dennis Wilson was one of the founding members of the legendary American band, The Beach Boys. It was Dennis, the only member who actually surfed, that came home after a day out in the waves and urged his older brother Brian, the musical leader of the group, to write a song about surfing. Brian did what his brother suggested, the group cut a demo, and the California sound was born.

In the early years, the free-spirited Dennis pretty much played the drums and met girls from all over the world. As he matured, he became a brilliant composer in his own right and wanted to see the group develop their more creative side, as opposed to just their commercial one. Dennis continued to surf, but he also bought a fifty-foot sailboat he called: “The Harmony”. He is quoted as saying: “The only place I can really feel free, is on the sea.”<sup>2</sup>

Dennis also did battle with demons, most notably the memories of an abusive father, which he attempted to drown out with alcohol. Over time his relationship with alcohol, mixed with other drugs, took control over his life, which damaged his relationships and music.

One December night, Dennis was visiting a friend whose boat was located next to where his own boat The Harmony had been berthed, but a few years earlier had been repossessed due to lack of payments.<sup>3</sup> At one point an inebriated Dennis dove into the chilly waters below to retrieve lost treasures he had thrown off his boat years before. One of the articles he returned to the surface with was a framed picture of him and his then girlfriend,

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<sup>2</sup> Adam Webb, *Dumb Angel* (London: Creation Books, 2001), 141.

<sup>3</sup> Jon Stebbins, *The Real Beach Boy* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2000), 213.

Karen, during happier days. He continued to dive down into the cold and murky seawater to comb the floor of the Marina. During one attempt, he never resurfaced. As irony would have it, the ocean where Dennis once emerged from to herald of its jubilation and excitement, would be the place where he would be drawn back to for his sad and silent end.

“Deep calls unto deep in the roar of your raging seas, your waves and your breakers have gone over me.” Psalm 42:7, NLT.

Sad story – of a real soul surfer ... gifted composer ... who lost something  
he lost himself...

Struggling to outswim his pain and demons... to out-run or outdistance them  
– to reach himself again ...

Or did he?

Fragments and shrouds of the lost treasure that he had retrieved reflected who he was ...  
but he didn't have the opportunity to reexamine and reassess – to determine ...

What was of value?

What needs to be thrown back overboard?

What are *we* drowning from?

What is it that weighs us down? What is it that we are attempting to outswim or outmaneuver, but can never quite get ahead of?

When using the language of *soul surfing*, there first needs to be some clarification of terms and basic framework to proceed from. By the word *soul* I mean the essence of who we are: Our personhood, our thoughts, our feelings and our natural God-given gifts. I submit that, in its intended, untarnished form, our soul is a sacred and holy place. Frank Rogers talks about how, throughout the ages, in both religion and philosophy, from the Buddha to Carl Jung, that at the core of our *soul* lies genuineness, lovingkindness and compassion.<sup>4</sup> He goes on to say that within each of us there is both a *true* self and a *false* self. The true self is at the heart of who we are, who we were created to be. Our false self then is a deviation from our *real* selves and hence creates a disconnect within ourselves and in our relationship with others.

From infancy, our trust-relationship with our parents help to instill a sense of security and shapes our identity. If young children are able to establish a healthy attachment or bond with their parent(s), they are more likely able to find their parental figures to be basically reliable and trustworthy. This results in a sense security, stability, and ability to form healthy bonds with others.<sup>5</sup> If that trust is damaged (not to mention never existing in the first place), then it can leave a sense of emptiness, abandonment and fear. Having been left this *hole in the soul*, so to speak, there is nothing left there to help foster a proper sense of *self* and self-worth. Therefore, one can seek out other substitutes to fill that void and *soothe the worried soul*. Unfortunately, not all of them are healthy.

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Rogers, Jr., *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2015), 60-61.

<sup>5</sup> Jacqueline Wallen, *Addiction in Human Development* (New York: Routledge), 122.

Such alternative sources can be classified as “objects”. Such objects can take the form of people, places and things.<sup>6</sup> This can include various ideas, memories and fantasies. As real-life relationships break-down (largely due to one’s inability to properly relate to others), unreal, imaginary or fabled objects can be particularly attractive because they cannot *hurt you back* and therefore considered safe. Unlike authentic relationships, you can control and regulate them (yet, in our ever-increasing impersonal and narcissistic society, we can view other people as objects, too – if they don’t work, we throw them away!). This type of arrangement prevents one from facing reality and taking personal responsibility. People can seek to find meaning, happiness, peace and freedom through a relationship to such objects.

As interactions to such objects become more habitual, they can become *ritualistic*. The object becomes a form of worship. It becomes God. Eventually, the worshipper becomes re-created in the image of their “god”. Their orbiting around their given object is what directs their path and restricts their daily activity and decisions. The object they once found pleasure, peace and satisfaction and having control over, has now taken control of them.

When the object of one’s concentration becomes the controlling agent in their life, then it can become an *addiction*. Our false self or addicted-self slowly creeps in and takes over to become the predominant-self. Like in the case of Dennis Wilson, it can eventually pull us down to the lowest of depths and drown our lives away. According to Gerald May: “Addiction is any compulsive, habitual behavior that limits our freedom of human desire.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gerald May, *Addiction & Grace* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 25.

<sup>7</sup> May, *Addiction & Grace*, 24.



Widely forms of addiction include:

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Money
- Gambling
- Anger
- Sex
- Internet
- Cell Phones
- People
- The past
- Family of Origin
- Ideology

Such objects are inherently or intrinsically neither good nor bad. Each have their own properties and varying degrees of potency. For example, obviously, the potency of heroin has a different potency than cooking flour. Strong evidence now shows that many have a predisposition to certain addictions, that it is hereditary, while others argue it is largely due to environment and conditioning (the *nature verses nurture*, argument).<sup>8</sup> Physiological and neurological factors have also been associated with how our bodies metabolize and process drugs differently, which makes some people more susceptible to them.<sup>9</sup> Still, other studies go as far as to show how one's ethnicity and gender also play into one's propensity toward

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Kinney, *Loosening the Grip* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 109.

<sup>9</sup> Carl L. Hart and Charles Ksir, *Drugs, Society and Human Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 216-217.

addiction.<sup>10</sup> These are all worthy studies. Yet, throughout it all we see that addiction pays no mind to race, sex, class, religious orientation, wealth, or age.

For the sake of this project, my focus on addiction has less to do with the power that an object itself possesses, as such, but the power we have given it over our lives.

Addiction does not only take place on an individual level, but on a communal one, as well. Like in the case of the individual worshipping an object, this can occur with groups of people of various sizes. For example, people who suffer from a lack of self (false self) are more susceptible to getting drawn into gangs or cults. Sadly, this is often due to those whose own family of origin had become fragmented or disintegrated and therefore they find acceptance and belonging in this new type of family. Religious groups and political parties, some of which have swayed from their founding principles and lost their way, will often sweep their members right along with them, not to mention attract new followers. Again, through the practice of *ritual*, addiction can take hold of the participants and take them down a self-deceptive road that leads to delusion and destruction.

It can happen anywhere from the local bar to the local church.

Each setting can be viewed as a form of *sanctuary* that one returns to at the end of the day or week. Both gather for their “hour of worship”. Both follow a “ritual” that can bring about structure to their lives, and its familiarity can bring about comfort, at least in the beginning...

When I was in seminary, I was sitting in what was called a “Word and Sacrament” class. Beyond covering the main scriptural and sacramental components to the worship service, the course also focused on the proper order of the traditional elements of the service are laid out.

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<sup>10</sup> Hart and Ksir, *Drugs, Society and Human Behavior*, 15-16.

(For the record, I am proud of my Lutheran identity, love the basic framework of our worship service, and although I do not consider them exclusive, I find the recognized sacramental instruments, as well as other symbols of God's grace, help to make the Gospel visible and real.)

While going over the order of worship, our professor, insisted that each of these elements needed to go in a very specific, traditional order and be followed *word for word*. Having been a lay youth worker before entering seminary, I was already familiar with this format, understood its significance, but would often modify sections and outright omit other portions when asked to facilitate a youth service in order to make it more inviting and relevant to members of the youth group, as well to the friends they may invite to attend that day. As a matter of fact, in all the towns I have served over the years, the ethnic-cultural make-up of the community had dramatically changed from when the church was first planted there, in most cases, at the same time, or shortly after, these cities came into being. So, for example, like in my hometown, Lutherans, which are predominantly made up of white-Scandinavians first opened their doors to a predominantly white-Scandinavian community. Yet the community has changed. People who now live near the church would likely be attracted to a taco bar rather than a plate of lutefisk.

At one point the instructor empathized the need to indoctrinate visitors who were likely feeling lost and unfamiliar with the service, then, after several weeks of this indoctrination, they would feel more acclimated and feel right at home.

Finally, I raised my hand and asked: "But what if that newcomer came to worship there and were bored to tears, never to return again?" A hush fell over the room. Clearly, I could have worded my question better, as my point had more to do with embracing the stranger rather than

what may energize them. I really don't remember my instructor's response, beyond seeing him become red in the face and the veins popping out of his neck. But the point is, I have come to believe my instructor, as well as many other longtime church leaders and members, have the inability to look beyond what has become sacred *to them*, even at the extent of overlooking our core missionary purpose of reaching out to others.

To be clear, the issue here has less to do with, what is the *right* way of doing worship and more to do with “what are we under the control of?” *What*, or *who*, is really the object of our worship – the liturgy or the Lord? Is this about maintaining the traditions of an exclusive social club, or making the gospel assessable to others? What *is our true* purpose as the church?

The implication here, is, if we as the church are to be about witness and service – to exist for *others*, then how effective are we really? How do we hope to help the addicted, if we ourselves are the addicted?

## Chapter 2

### Catching the Wave of the Spirit

“And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who dwells within you.” Romans 8:11, NIV.

Now that we have dived deep into the darker crevasses of our humanity and encountered various passageways, blockages and detours that wander about, some of which led to dead-ends, we now look to what it is that can bring the light of healing, wholeness and freedom into our lives. While the model I present is Christian in nature, I believe the basic apparatus or structure can be used interchangeably with other religious and spiritual expressions. Respectfully, what I am about to offer could possibly fit into the category of “New Creation Theology”, if not in an unconventional and offbeat sort of way.

As I understand it, and broadly speaking, “New Creation Theology” is centered on our recognition that our old selves (false selves) have been put to death on the cross and that our new selves (true selves) have emerged with the new life we have in Christ (II Corinthians 5:14-17). I would submit that, the language here, instead of saying that something wildly metamorphic has occurred and that we have been transmuted into something altogether otherworldly or angelic, that the transformation that has taken place is actually more restorative and regenerative in nature. It is a spiritual renovation where the creature is restored into a right relationship with its creator and can now perceive and operate in *new* ways, yet the way that we were originally created to be.

Also, the Spirit that already lives within us, is continually at work in bringing restoration and renewal more fully into our lives. Here, Paul states that *resurrection* is a work of the Holy Spirit that comes from God. Sometimes we are aware of how the Spirit is working within us,

and out in the world, and other times, not so much. Sometimes it feels as though the Spirit, not to mention our *soul*, has been removed from us altogether, and we need help in retrieving it again.

With using that as a basic framework, I begin with introducing two common terms that I have given two uncommon definitions: “Recovery” and “Spirituality”.

### **Recovery**

*Recovery* means *reconnection*. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines recovery as: “A return to a normal state of health, mind and state.”<sup>11</sup> Simply put, what has been disconnected is now reconnected. In a spiritual sense, this includes a recovery/reconnection between us and God, others and ourselves.

### **Spirituality**

*Spirituality* means *rediscovery*. Once the reconnection/reattachment takes place, then spirituality/rediscovery is the ongoing flow of clearing and cleansing within the *pipeline* that exists in order to keep the channel open and unclogged, that we might have a more conscious awareness and relationship with God, others and ourselves.

To use a vintage surfing term, soul surfing calls us to “get tubed”. The wave we ride is the wave of the Spirit.

As a Lutheran Christian, Holy Baptism is central to my faith. It is a powerful expression of God’s unfathomable grace and the welcoming rite by which we are incorporated into the body of Christ. In the case of infant baptism, it comes as a gift that is received when we are completely powerless or even aware of it. In this mysterious act, we are joined in the death

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<sup>11</sup>“Recovery,” *Merriam-Webster*, accessed September 15, 2019, <https://merriam-webster.com>.

and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Words are spoken over us that we are “Sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, this is not just a onetime event, but is to be remembered/practiced daily in order to reawaken and reinvigorate the resurrected life within us. There are a variety of ways to do this, which we will explore further as we later dive deeper into the realm of *spiritual practice*.

The following passage, which is referred to in Luther’s’ Small Catechism, holds great theological meaning to me personally as well as provides a spiritual compass for our soul surfing:

“We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:4, ESV.

Throughout the Scriptures we see images of water that can be either life-giving or life taking. From the crossing of the Red Sea to the Baptism of Jesus, water is used both literally and symbolically as a sign of crossing from death to new life. In reference to Holy Baptism, the method St. Paul is referring to here is the act of total immersion (buried) under the water as an expression of how we are joined in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther states that our sinful nature needs to be *drowned daily* in order to experience the new life we have in Christ.<sup>13</sup> This is not a meaningless drowning that ends with our lifeless body laying at the bottom of the marina, but a redemptive one that washes away sin and death. Our life is saved. Our *soul* is saved. Our true self is restored from the false one.

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<sup>12</sup> *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 231.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), 25.

Yet this baptismal cycle is all quite counter-intuitive and counter-cultural. Our natural instinct is preserve life , not end it! I can remember vividly being confused and frightened when I was first introduced to this concept. It sounded as though I was being asked to give up my very personhood and identity. How could I consider *dying to* something I was still trying to figure out and attempting to gain mastery over? Little did I know that by *letting go* of who I *think* I am, I would then be able to retrieve who I *really* am.

In the center of Mark's gospel, Jesus says that "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." Mark 8:35, NIV. To give up our life, in this sense, is to give up our false self. To enter into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is to reclaim our true selves. *Life* is from the Greek root word *psuche*. It means *breath of life* but can also refer to one's *soul*.

During a sermon one Sunday, my pastor was sharing about the popular bumper sticker that says: "God is my co-pilot", at which he exclaimed: "Well, if God is your co-pilot, then you'd better scoot over and let him take the wheel!" In short, authentic spirituality is not asking for God's *help* (and God certainly does not need ours) but lies in the letting God *take the wheel* of our lives.

Contrary to what we might hear from mainstream religion today, to be a new creation in Christ does not mean we are called to *recreate ourselves*. It is not about reimagining or remolding ourselves into a better version of who *we think we ought to be*, or something *other than who we are*, altogether. Likewise, we cannot realize it by calling attention to the lack of spiritual transformation we perceive in others, which we were not meant for, or appointed to, anyway. In short, as soul surfers we are not called to swim harder or dive deeper in order to get to some far-off buried treasure before someone else snatches it away from us.



Some of us, depending on who we are and/or how we have been conditioned, still struggle with various forms of control. Whatever force that drives us, our effort to release ourselves from its grasp can be an ongoing battle. Others may appear to go through life free from struggle, or can “handle” it better, or do a better job of hiding it. Then there are those who maintain that a weekly dose of Sunday morning worship is sufficient to bring about stability and balance to their lives. Still, others claim to have undergone a religious experience that has cured them from whatever “demon” that they were driven by, once and for all.

That said, as the sun rises up from out of the darkness to bring us a new day, we are all, to some extent, in need of a daily rebirth. As opposed to being struck by some singular, miraculous blinding-light, our spiritual transformation is something that is ongoing. Such a process calls us to be more aware of God in our daily lives in a very intentional and personal way. It is about *reconnection* and *rediscovery*. It is about the false self giving way to the true self. It is a quality that is less about adding more, and more about letting go, and letting the Spirit enter in. It is about a daily baptismal burial and resurrection. It is the means of grace, which can be accessed, not just weekly at that altar or the font, but daily in ways that we find holy and nurturing for us. It is the real presence of God which can be found and experienced in un-ceremonial, unconventional, yet, basic, every-day and ordinary ways, like a smile, a hug, or a kind word. It is, as we move from one juncture to the next, the removal of the outer layer that reveals, underneath it all, whatever we, or others, have heaved upon ourselves, a child of God who is fully loved and accepted by God – just as we are.

In the beginning, when we were created, along with all creation, God made us in God’s image and declared us as *good*. According to the Genesis account, we were *not* created as *sinful*;

but created as *good*. Richard Rohr said, “I believe in original blessing.”<sup>14</sup> In Christ, we *are* a new creation! Our true image and goodness have been restored! We can let go of our need to undergo some self-spiritual-makeover or run to win some moral marathon. Still, other things continue to deface or distort God’s image and goodness. That is why we are called to *live out our baptism* daily in order to cleanse and clear out whatever has accumulated that covers up who we are as a *New Creation* in Christ.<sup>15</sup> This is accomplished by the work of the Spirit, and not by us. The various ways we can ride that wave, that rolls in like the ongoing tide, is what we will look at next.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, with unveiled faces, all reflect the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:17-16, BSB.

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ* (London: Convergent Books, 2019), 59.

<sup>15</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 25.

### Chapter 3

#### Splitting the Peak

Being a lover of the all-things Southern California, with America's top surfing band heading the list, its often been asked of me: "So, Dan, are you a surfer?" Well, the answer is yes, I have *surfed* but I consider myself more of an avid bodysurfer. However, that said, I think that my very first surfing experience is noteworthy, not only because it is memorable to me personally, but because I think it makes an important distinction for my project.

My family spent every summer on the Balboa Peninsula in Newport Beach, California. We shared a little cottage with my mom's best friend, JoAnn, and her two boys Ronnie and Glen, who were like big brothers to me. One summer when I was 14, the oldest, Ronnie, 19, brought his new girlfriend, Patrice, 18, along, who was a bit of a tomboy at heart and avid surfer. Because of her salty demeanor and gravelly voice, I nicknamed her "Peppermint Patty". Patrice knew I loved to body-surf, so not long after we arrived and got settled, invited me to go surfing. I found the thought of trying to stay afloat of a big surfboard against those big Balboa bone-crushing waves to be terrifying. I thought for sure the thing would fly out of the raging whitewater and bust me in the head. Patrice began to taunt me that only *true* Beach Boys fans were surfers: "C'mon Danny – what are ya – chicken?" Patrice was a surfer chick with an attitude, and I never took a dare lightly.

Early the next morning we set out to the *Jetty*, which was a local surfing hot spot, located just north of us between Newport and Huntington Beach. While heading up Pacific Coast Highway, my new surf-instructor clued me in to the basics of surfing so I wouldn't look too ridiculous in front of the other seasoned surfers. I remember the two of us walking out toward the

surf, boards under our arms, while the surfers out in the waves looked at us quizzically. We were not locals, and I am sure they were wondering who in the heck the hot chick with the kid was.

Once out in the water, I remember finding difficulty with getting positioned and feeling awkward and tense. After struggling to get out to where the waves break, I became more settled. After a few false-starts, I felt the force of the tide pulling from underneath me. I heard: “Go for it, Danny, Go!” I don’t recall how many times I tried to get up... and fell. I could hear the other surfers heckling and pointing at me. But I kept at it. I knew I just needed to get the hang of it—the feel of it. Timing was key.

Finally, I made it up, and stayed up! I was surfing! I thought *wow, this is great!* Although I was only able to maintain my balance for a short while, I was improving at each attempt. I felt the spray against my face and the rush run through my veins as I cut down the face of the wave—and then—over the falls! Crunch! It was exhilarating! I excitedly climbed back on my board and paddled out to try again. After a while, I heard the other surfers whistling at me! Wow!

At one point, Patrice paddled up next to me and said: “Hey Danny, these guys are liable to clock you one good if you keep cutting them off!” As it turned out, they were not whistling to congratulate me, they were whistling to alert me that they had caught the same wave I was on and/or next in line for a ride. Huh? I had no clue.

I paddled back out into place, attempting to be more conscious of my fellow surfers. Since I am unable to whistle with much volume, if I noticed another surfer nearby when going toward a wave, I immediately cleared out. At one point, a wave came into view, with no other surfer in sight, so off I went! Yet, as soon as I did, another surfer did appear, right out of nowhere, just to the right of me! To avoid contact, I cut more sharply to the left, but evidentially

too far, as I was swallowed up by the wave and over the falls I went! Clunk! I figured by now I had surely overstayed my welcome and likely cut the guy off, so made my way back to the shore.

When I was walking up the shoreline, who do you suppose I saw walking up toward me, but the surfer dude who was on that last wave with me! I figured, this is it, I've had it. Instead, I noticed as he got closer that he had this huge grin on his face and he looked at me and said: "Hey dude, way to split the peak! Way to split the peak!" I stood there, with my mouth gaping open, and although I had no idea what he was talking about, was immensely grateful that just I didn't get clobbered. A few minutes later, when I met up with Patrice, I asked her: "What does it mean to 'split the peak?'" She said: "It means that, on some waves there is an identifiable high-point where, if there are two surfers close on each side of the peak, then they can both ride the same wave; one can go in one direction, and the other, in the other. Once you get more experience you will learn to read the waves, and when you see this A-Frame type arise, and wanna catch the wave, look both ways and depending on which side you're on, should call out, 'I'm going to the left' or 'right', etc."

Well, my surfing career became kind of spotty after that, as I gradually resumed my first love, bodysurfing, as my go-to form of wave riding. But I never forget that first experience. It also got me to thinking that the relationship between the church and the twelve-step movement is much like *splitting the peak*. We are in fact, riding the *same wave*, going in *two different directions*, yet *both moving forward*.

The church was founded 2000 years ago by believers in Jesus Christ and his teaching. Their experience is what influenced the Gospels; letters of the New Testament; creeds of the early church; and various doctrines that sprung various Christian denominations. Their interpretation of the word of God and the traditions that have accompanied them is what has

shaped who they are and how they exercise their faith. Over the past century, there are some Christian denominations that have grown, while there are others that have declined. Some work well and have even forged ecumenical and interfaith partnerships, while others refuse to have anything to do with them at all.

Besides Holy Baptism, Lutherans, like other mainline protestant churches, recognize and celebrate Holy Communion. Much like in our own daily baptismal remembrances, at the Table we are mysteriously joined in the brokenness and wholeness of the body of Christ, infused by the Holy Spirit. Due to doctrinal mandates, along with other Christian denominations, there is a range by what “condition” one is permitted to partake in the Holy Meal. So, while their regular use of Word and Sacrament has brought about a sense of personal wellbeing and nurture to the church, I wonder how many really have actually felt led into solidarity with others who are also broken in body and spirit?<sup>16</sup> Still, the church as a body has been dutiful in providing schools, medical care, a base for justice advocacy, and various forms of social services, including offering space for the twelve-step community.

Alcoholics Anonymous was founded nearly 80 years ago, marked by the meeting of Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith. Both men were members of the “Oxford Group” that was founded by a Lutheran pastor named Frank Buchman which focused less on doctrine and more on reaching out to those who were in need.<sup>17</sup> After a failed-business meeting in Akron, Ohio, and a stint of short-lived sobriety, the compulsion for Wilson to drink resumed. He reached out and found an Oxford Group Phone Directory, and was able to locate another group member, Dr. Smith, a surgeon, who lived nearby. There, the two connected and found solidarity in their common

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<sup>16</sup>John Pavlovitz, *A Bigger Table* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 114.

<sup>17</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (New York: Alcoholic Anonymous Publishers, 1957), 64-68.

malady. Wilson and Smith spent a month together and formulated the basis of what would become *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Since then the movement has flourished. Due to the turnover and issues of anonymity, it is difficult to gage precisely how many people have benefited from, or attempted *false-starts* to this program, but there is no doubt that it has helped millions of people recover from addiction and go on to lead productive lives. It has transcended barriers of race, creed, languages and has circled the world over.<sup>18</sup>

The main distinction between the vision of AA and the church was that AA's vision was broader, more inclusive and pluralistic. Besides Jesus Christ, one could look to a "higher power" from a different faith tradition, not to mention choose from some other source altogether.

As preface to the next section, it is necessary to look first at the two major sources of the church and the twelve-step movement: The Bible and the Big Book. Both are the written testament for these expressions. The twelve-step movement has its roots in the Bible. Both tell of faith stories and practical teaching. Both are in constant need of review, reinterpretation, and translation. Central to the Big Book is the twelve-steps, which is the condensed guidelines that members follow, whereas the Bible has various lists of guidelines that offer attributes and instructions of the faith, like the Ten Commandments or Beatitudes, not to mention various other codes and prescripts. While I understand that there are mutual advantages of a better understanding sections of both, for this study, I am using the twelve-steps as the touchstone for offering a concise source to draw some comparisons and other points of significance. The following are those steps with a brief description to each one.

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<sup>18</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, 32-37.

## Diving into the Twelve-Steps

The first three steps talk about the *problem*, while the remaining nine talk about the *solution*.

### Step One

#### **1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.**

The 1<sup>st</sup> step is the *I Can't Step*. This is the admission that whatever we have endeavored to control over our lives has now taken control over us. Our own efforts and methods to overcome these forms of control have all proved to be useless. This involves, not another list of *do's* and *don't's* but a release of one's *entire being*. “Indeed, we felt sure we were going to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead.” (II Cor. 1:9, NLT).

### Step Two

#### **2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> step is the *God Can Step*. This is jumping off point of *getting off the merry-go-round* or the *hamster wheel*. We simply cannot hold on to our old sources of reliance and security anymore. If one does not currently have a higher power, they are encouraged to choose one. This can range from creation in the outdoors, the twelve-step community itself, or simply understanding God as **Good Orderly Direction**



### Step Three

#### **3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> step is the *Let Go and Let God Step*. The operative word here is “turn” or “return”. Here there is the movement from surrender toward faith. This step opens a new door to a *relationship* with our higher power. Slogans include: “Surrender to the winning side” or “God, I give you permission to put your signature on the blank check of my life”.

### Step Four

#### **4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

It should be noted that Bill Wilson and some of the other early pioneers of AA were businessmen and were familiar with taking a commercial inventory of their *assets* and *liabilities*. When taking stock, if an item is found valuable it should be kept, but if it is damaged or unsalable, it should be gotten rid of. A checklist was encouraged to take into an account one’s assets and liabilities.

The 4<sup>th</sup> step is the initial soul surfing step. We now dive deep within ourselves to bring to the surface both those things that we perceive to be *assets* and *liabilities* in our lives. From there we discern what is of value and what needs to be thrown overboard. From the opening story, it was what Dennis Wilson never had the opportunity to do.

### Step Five

#### **5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

Confession is good for the soul ... surfer! The telling of one’s own story is the beginning of healing therapy.<sup>19</sup> In short, you *cannot heal what you do not acknowledge*. Once this occurs, one can begin to feel a sense of relief and

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<sup>19</sup> Dennis C. Morreim, *The Road to Recovery* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 77.

forgiveness. While it takes both humility and sheer honesty, it can lead us from isolation and loneliness into companionship and community.

### **Step Six**

#### **6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

Here we come to yet another level of distinguishing between what *we can't do* and what *God can do*. Being *entirely ready* means we are ready to acknowledge that it is God, not we, who is able to do *the heavy lifting*. Here it is also important to pray that we begin to have those things still unknown to us, to become known, but also to trust that this is an ongoing process.

### **Step Seven**

#### **7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**

*Humbly asking* is a posture that is knowing our place before God and to be reminded that our hope is in God alone. To fall back into self-reliance and avoid the direction of God is to resume on a road to ruin. Richard Rohr wisely reminds us that we need to allow our character defects to be “transformed or they will be transmitted.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Step Eight**

#### **8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**

If step 4 was the *personal* soul surfing step, then step 8 is the *relational* one. Instead of an inward, this is more an outward form of house-cleaning. Here we seek to remember and name those we have hurt and the harm we have caused them. The reaction from them may range from resentment to graciousness, but this step is also necessary for our *own* healing and liberation.

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<sup>20</sup> Herb Kagen, *Twelve Steps to Spiritual Awakening* (Torrance: Capizon Publishing, 2010), 147.

### Step Nine

#### **9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

Here we make the actual amends where we have *messed up* or *blown it* with another. It should be noted that this action is not dependent on the other's acceptance of our repentance of the misdeed, but on our willingness to be humble and painfully honest. Asking for forgiveness may not always result in a restored relationship, but confessing our wrongdoing and making amends keeps *our side of the street clean*.

### Step Ten

#### **10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**

Our soul surfing must be ongoing. Like in my own faith tradition/practice, I need to live out my baptism on a daily basis. This includes taking a *spot-check* of ourselves throughout our day. Frank Rogers talks about, when we react to things outwardly, we need to take a *U-turn* and move inward to attend to the unsettled *movements* within ourselves in order to remain grounded.<sup>21</sup>

### Step Eleven

#### **11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**

Here is where our work with spiritual *reconnection* and *rediscovery* really digs in. Although it may be an oversimplification, meditation could be defined as *listening* to God, and prayer, as *talking* to God. It should also be noted that our goal in this exchange ought not to be an attempt to change God per se, but ourselves.

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<sup>21</sup> Rogers, Jr., *Practicing Compassion*, 66.

## Step Twelve

**12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

A spiritual awakening affirms a newfound or renewed awareness of God in our lives. A natural outflow of this leads us from *self* to the *other*. In the recovery community, this is better known as “twelve-stepping”. There is no greater healing power for one who still suffers, than from what can come from the one who has already *been there*.

### Same Wave. Different Ride.

The following is my own attempt to synthesize what I consider to be some of the essential similarities between the church and the twelve-step movement, using primarily the content covered so far. For the sake of simplicity, the word *God* will be used interchangeably with the term, *higher power*.

- Both founded on the principle that we as human beings are **broken by nature** and in need of **God's grace** in our lives.
- Because of the **pervasiveness of sin/form of control**, ultimately, in the end, we are left only to call upon a **power greater than ourselves**.
- **Conversion**: The act of changing from one state to another. Which like in my faith tradition, happens on a daily basis.
- **Confession**: We are aware of our brokenness and *come clean* before God and others in order for real change and growth to occur.
- **Ongoing faith/reliance** on a power greater than ourselves that produces strength, confidence and hope.
- **Prayer and Meditation**: Being intentional about keeping the channel open to God in order to be more fully aware of God's presence in our lives.
- **Community**: Our healing and wholeness cannot be achieved in isolation. Our life is not just dependent upon ourselves – but on others, as well.
- **Bear witness** to what God has done and continues to do.

- **Service** to meet the needs of our greater community/our human family, and according to NT scripture: “the least of these”; those whom are in the greatest of need.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Channel Surfing – Switching Over to the Other Zone**

Like American viewers were once warned during the opening narration of the classic “Outer Limits” sci-fi television series, the flow of this paper will now be “interrupted” and take you into a different “dimension”. Specifically, up to this point we have been covering mostly “source material” and will now move into the actual interaction that occurred at the event itself. At this precise, corresponding, intersecting point, following my concluding thoughts of “Same Wave/Different Ride”, we moved into the small group section at the event. As my own “opening narration” I would like to offer some general background about the population that were in attendance that evening. The target area for this event was South Bay Conference of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

There are 13 congregations in this conference.

- 1 Latino Speaking
- 1 Asian Speaking
- 11 English Speaking
  - ¼ Latino
  - ¼ African American
  - ¼ Mixed
  - ¼ Caucasian

Out of these 13 congregations, about 1/3 of them host/house a twelve-step group. Of the congregations that do, each of their pastors were invited and asked to invite one representative of the twelve-step group who meet there.

At the event, there were a total of approximately 50 people (a relatively even split of church folk and 12-steppers)

- 5 congregations
- 7 pastors
- 7 small groups made of 7 people each
- 2 community leaders

At each table there was a “Soul Surfing Guide” that helped facilitate and a “scribe” who took notes. These individuals were also evenly split, representing both groups. At the end of the small group session, the participants and scribes placed their responses into toy treasure chests. The following is a record of the answers, based on the completed discussion questions, submitted by the participants.

### **Small Group Reflection Responses**

#### **1. Can you name at least one thing from the lecture that caught your interest?**

“How can we help an addict if we ourselves are addicts?”

“I liked your definition as recovery and spirituality.”

“Didn’t know anything about the twelve steps. Thank you for laying them out so methodically. Also liked how you tied it into the church. Handouts were very helpful!”

“Your connection between the twelve-steps and the church was brilliant!”

“Splitting the Peak! Good analogy and best part of the presentation!”

“True self and false self.”

“Original Blessing.”

“Loved your scriptural basis for things. Worked well!”



**2. Can you name at least one similarity and/or one difference between the church and the twelve-step group that caught your attention?**

“Faith-based recovery.”

“The church teaches that we are new creations; AA lays out a step-by-step process to be renewed.”

“Shared mission: to set people free.”

“We needn’t be ensnared by guilt and shame. We all have “defects of character” as a result of our sinful nature and urged to ask God to remove them.”

“To give of ourselves to help others.”

“Both not bad people trying to become good, but sick people seeking to become well.”

“Splitting the Peak! AA and the church! Same goal, two different approaches!”

“Those who forgives much, loves much.”

“One must be wounded to be healed; die to live, lose to win.”

“Both start with brokenness and need for healing, not evil and judgment.”

“The church needs to ‘get real’.

“The church is more hierarchical.”

“Both should encourage the other to look outward.”

“Both are about confession and grace.”

“Both have those who are seeking a healthy family who are in recovery from abusive families.”

“The holy book for the church is the Bible, for AA it is the Big Book.”

“The twelve-steps is based in the gospel.”

“Both invite you to call upon God to remove your shortcomings.”

“Catch a Wave!”

**3. Can you name at least one misconception that was cleared up for you about your group or the other group?**

“They are actually not all that different – same wave, different ride.”

“Lutheran teaching is pretty cool, makes me want to attend your church!”

“We are both on the same wave.”

“Learned about Celebrate Recovery, a Christian-based 12-step group.”

“Learned about how the church works.”

“Learned more about what the church should be, but I found is not. Too hypocritical. I’ll stick with AA.”

“Twelve-step groups are not self-help, but seeking God’s help!”

“Ignorance abounds. Thanks for the education!”

“There are other methods of recovery out there.”

“Alcoholism is an incurable disease – but it can be arrested!”

“AA is not the enemy of the church – it wants to put people back in your pews!”

**4. What was not mentioned in the lecture about the topic/these groups that you would like to point out?**

“The church needs to explore how to better remove the stigma of addiction to help support AA groups besides just renting out space for them.”

“Find out what keeps addicted people away from church who may want to attend.”

“How can the church become a more welcoming place to the addicted?”

“The Recovery Bible.”

“Church is overly structured and political, while AA is more informal and uncomplicated.”

“Mindful of anonymity issues, how could AA and the church minister together?”

“Done with trying to be ‘good enough’ at church.”

“Desperation is a gift.”

“We all need to be more authentic. Keep it real!”

“How decentralized AA groups are.”

“There are more addicts sitting in the pews than those congregations are aware of.”

“The damage done to families.”

“When do you know when to go for help?”

**5. What would you like to learn more about that relates to the church or the twelve-step movement?**

“How can we co-exist?”

“How can they be joined?”

“Do they really need to be separate?”

“Future sessions focused on the family and co-dependency.”

“Do all people from AA/the twelve-step movement want their anonymity protected?”

“How can they work together?”

“More examples and ideas of how we can find common ground.”

“Step 9 talks about making a direct amends unless it injures them. Would have liked to have this explained further.”

“More emphasis on bridging the gap between to the two groups.”

## **6. Other comments?**

“Enjoyed your history lesson on both AA and the church.”

“The twelve-steps were laid out clearly and easy to follow along.”

“Loved your re-definitions on Recovery and Spirituality.”

“I learned to let God be God.”

“The Dennis Wilson illustration was profound and poignant.”

“AA’s unique feature among other recovery alternatives lies in community.”

“Even introverts (like Dan and myself) need community.”

“Future topic: Shame.”

“Smart Recovery.”

“Say more about multiple addictions and cross-addiction.”

“Surfing stories and imagery worked well with recovery.”

“Great lecture!”

“Please take “out on the road”; use in sermons out on your circuit!”

“Longer small group discussion.”

“Lengthy lecture but could not leave anything out!”

“I wanted to hear more.”

### **Small Group Reflection Responses Summary**

Based on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the highest, taken from both written and verbal responses, the following is what impacted the participants the most:

1. Splitting the Peak
2. General myths dispelled, and clarity provided, about the twelve-step movement and the church.
3. The Dennis Wilson Story (and how it was integrated).
4. Bridging the gap between the twelve-step movement and the church.
5. Redefinition of recovery and spirituality.

The last segment of the event which corresponds with the last chapter of this study of the same name: “Getting Out of the Shallows – Go Deep”, took place following the small group section. The feedback from that segment is included in the evaluation portion.

“The great issues of humanity are not solved by treading water on the surface of your consciousness.” - Adyashanti

## Chapter 5

### Getting Out of the Shallows – Go Deep

“When Jesus finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.” (Luke 5:4)

In this passage Jesus urges his disciples to move beyond a place of familiarity and safety and to cast out to deeper waters. Understandably, to be near the shore, when our faith is in its infancy, is the appropriate place to be nurtured. Elementary learning ought to be cradled in a safe harbor and monitored environment. But to stay indefinitely in a *comfort zone* can inhibit our sense of purpose and lead to stagnation. Our fears never go away; our outlook is shortsighted; and our main goal is self-preservation. The only standard is set by the status-quo... to wade in the ripples of the superficial, trivial and materialistic. There are no waves here. There is an old saying that goes, “A calm sea never made a skilled sailor.”

Up to this point, our soul surfing has been primarily exploratory and correlative in nature. For this final chapter, I will endeavor to advance into deeper waters, where we can begin to reflect on, in light of our new discoveries, how we can put what we have learned into practice. It is, in fact, where we pass from *catching* the wave of the Spirit, to *riding* it.

During my preadolescence, my parents enrolled me and my siblings in swimming lessons at our local high school pool. There is a huge natatorium there with two pools, a shallow pool and a deep pool. The program was designed to start the children at the elementary stage, “Tadpole 1” in the shallow pool, and then advance them up the ladder to the more advanced and final level, “Porpoise”, in the deeper pool. Because I already loved the water, blessed by those many summers spent on Balboa Bay, I passed through the ranks rather quickly and effortlessly. It was good activity, fun to be with the other neighborhood kids, and did sharpen my skills as a young swimmer. At the end of each stage, I would be awarded a certification of completion.

Not long afterward, my parents enrolled me in confirmation class at our local Lutheran church. Unlike swimming lessons, instead of a physical/athletic indoctrination, this was a spiritual one. The watery images about Baptism that came from the catechism did not resonate as well as the learning I did out in a swimming pool or in the bay or out in the ocean. What's more, I needed to commit such doctrinal sections to memory if I were to be confirmed, which, according to my mother, my life depended on. My attention was directed more toward cavorting about with my church buddies, carrying on with the girls, and getting into all sorts of mischief. In the end, I did receive my certification of completion, yet, I never really did get out of the shallow end – not for a long time, that is.

Many years later, I would come to realize that what I received when I was confirmed was not a graduation diploma, but a certificate showing that I received the rudimentary instruction in the faith, formally called *Affirmation of Baptism*. Ironically, all the biblical and doctrinal instruction I received, that I was quite oblivious to at the time, really summated to God's faithful promise made to me at baptism, that would be kept by God, whether I did or not. The question remained, would I allow this gift of grace to sink in, and if so, how would I keep it alive? Needless to say, this was to be the beginning of my faith journey, and not the end.

Both the twelve-step movement and the church do not have an ending date as to when their "program" is finished. There are no certifications of completion. As Luther said, "Life is not so much about achieving health, but healing."<sup>22</sup> Like we saw in Step 10, it is a life-long process, not short-term therapy. Both are not about a destination, per se (at least not during our earthly existence), but a journey of faith. Both are about progress, not perfection. Both offer general *steps* that some take quite rigidly and literally, while others more loosely and

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 32 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1958), 24.



conceptually, usually based on how one is indoctrinated/instructed; or “hardwired”, or type or level of need.

Yet, spiritually speaking, how do we know when it is time to move along from the shallow pool to the deep one? What exactly does that look like, anyway? Instead of a deeper level of faith, it could be mistook for a place divided into lanes where we enter into some lifelong swim competition. Why would one want to go there? Why not stay where we are if we are not bothering anybody and splash away with all the other kiddies?

There is an adage that goes: “Bloom where you are planted.” I suppose that means that we are to be content as to where God has placed us. But what happens if we come to discover one day that the soil we have been planted in is unhealthy, or the environment constricts expansion? I submit that, in some cases, we need to *uproot* and *put down new roots* in order to grow, thrive and flourish. Sadly, I see people that I grew up with who have remained geographically and emotionally stuck in the same place they have always been, in a *shallow pool*, where they remain in the same state and repeat the same self-defeating behaviors they have always exhibited over and over again. Their same peers since childhood reinforce this system with the same standards they themselves have been conditioned to measure their own lives by. Whether they know it or not, the lanes of their own swim contest have already been established and divided up.

In short, our sense of worth, inner peace and an emotional/spiritual depth cannot come from among those who remain stuck, and often consigned themselves to, the *shallow pool*, or at the expense of those who appear to be floundering. There, relationships and behaviors remain empty, thoughtless, and can be hurtful, never to reach maturation or resolve. This ranges from the trivial, to the consequential. Sometimes a dramatic occurrence can break that cycle – but not

always. Our pain, some demon or other power greater than ourselves can drive us out, or we can begin to stagnate, eventually degenerate, and self-destruct.

In his last moments of life, Dennis Wilson desperately dove for, and retrieved, several treasures from his past that he tossed up onto the deck of the boat. He never made it back for the opportunity to try and make sense of the sorted fragments of his life. Like the ancient practice of *Kintsugi*, where pieces of broken pottery are lacquered back together to create an artform that can be even more beautiful than before, his artistry would never reach that next evolution. He would never have the opportunity to sing songs of gratefulness of how his woundedness and weakness turned to healing and strength.

During this present moment, we are given an opportunity to dive for lost treasures and bring them to light. Of these unique effects, brought up from the depths of our soul, three questions ought to be asked about them:

1. Which ones should be kept?
2. Which ones should be modified?
3. Which ones should be thrown overboard altogether?

Let us look carefully at this. The treasures we have brought to the surface and spread out on our decks can prove to be both good and bad; a blessing and a curse. Like the 4<sup>th</sup> step, we have our own assortment of *assets* and *liabilities*. From inherent gifts to developed skills, what we possess can be used for constructive or destructive purposes.

Likewise, the rituals we have been steeped in, or have encamped ourselves in along the way, can be enriching or harmful. In some cases, these rituals have not been utilized and applied as they were intended to. Dr. Thom Johnson, when talking about rituals, says that:

Ritual connects to the deepest emotional levels of our memories and serves as a significant resource for times of joy and celebration, as well as sorrow and

loss. Rituals can provide the sense of continuity needed as we encounter transitions in life and move through the various seasons of change. It is up to us to shape our rituals so that they give God an entry point into our daily life and provide some “breathing room” for the Spirit to enter and inspire us to live faithfully and fruitfully.<sup>23</sup>

The ritual we practice can shed light on our faith journey, or it can also close us off from it, as well. It can help release us and keep us free from various forms of enslavement, or it can become another object of control that binds us down and keeps us from living life to its fullest. A misconception with the twelve-step movement is that they are just trading in one addiction for another. Not if practiced properly. If the various *rituals* provided for in the twelve-step movement are practiced properly, they should lead to freedom and a new way of life.

In review, *who we have become* and *what we do* has come about from how we have been conditioned. We are told: “This is how you should go about living your life” or “this is how you ought to think and behave”, etc. Likewise, when it comes to what we do to care for ourselves is also a result of what others have taught us: “Do more of this and you will be happier”, or “do less of that and you will not be unhappy”, etc. This is where prayerful soul surfing is necessary. Sometimes our preliminary task is not to learn something new, per se, but to deconstruct what we have already learned, and if need be, to *unlearn* it. Some questions to ask are:

What is natural for you?

What brings you life?

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas K. Johnson, *Celebrating the Seasons of Baptismal Living* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 7.

This may take some honest reflection, and will require us to put a check on the negative self-talk by pressing the “stop button” in our heads from replaying the old tapes over and over again and to get out from under the control of what others “think” is good for us.

So, when it comes to spiritual practices, I do not believe that there is a “one size fits all”. We as human beings have been formed and forged differently, by internal and external forces and resonate with some things differently than others. But that said, allow me to share some general practices that, if applied properly and regularly, could help facilitate spiritual growth in our life:

- Weekly Worship
- Prayer & Meditation
- Bible study
- Community involvement
- Social Service

For me, I enjoy practicing meditation during the early morning hours (or various times throughout my day) in my home office with candles lit or sitting/walking along on the beach. Being by the waves and breathing along with the rising and falling of the tide can make me feel one with God’s creation and can be a very powerful, and even healing meditative experience for me. Also, I have been drawn more to spending time in one of our California deserts. The extreme heat and rawness of the terrain in juxtaposition to a cool flowing spring nearby is also a very powerful setting/sensation for me that provides a deeply enriching spiritual experience. Meditation can be an effective and wonderful way to get in touch with your inner self and God. But it takes time and practice. All good things we want to develop and achieve in our lives take time and practice.

The following is what is known as a guided meditation. It was one that I wrote especially for this project and led toward the end of the event. A guided meditation is where a leader leads the participants through a series of visualizations. From the outset, one is invited to get comfortable in their seat, close their eyes, and let go of distractions by becoming conscious of their breathing: Inhaling the freshness of the air and exhaling the exhaust of accumulated clutter and congestion in the mind. Depending on how it is constructed, a guided meditation can bring about peace, reflection and enlightenment.

### **Soul Surfing Meditation**

**By Dan Gibson**

Imagine that you are lying comfortably on a great big yellow raft  
resting peacefully on a large body of water near the shore  
The sky is blue – and the sun is bright beaming down upon your face  
Various thoughts enter your mind and pass like the clouds passing by above  
Slowly you feel the raft is getting soft. The air is dissipating  
You feel the cool ocean water rising and lapping around your body, arms and face  
You find it refreshing  
You are relaxed and at peace  
You close your eyes and feel the security of the great mother ocean  
Cradling you  
Embracing you  
I want you to remain conscious of your breathing  
You open your eyes, and lo, you are breathing underwater!  
You are unconcerned and breathing quite naturally

You look around

You see dark blues and greens in the backdrop, like a canvas

With ribbons of gold and turquoise brushing across

What other things do you see?

You notice the raft has vanished

You find yourself casually swimming

Gliding effortlessly through the depths

You feel a pulling sensation, and don't resist it

You see a team of smiling dolphins swimming next to you

As if to say you are welcome here

And they accompany you as companions

Along the way

At some point, they veer off and disappear off in the horizon

And now you are swimming alone

But are good with that

And appreciated their company

Along the way

Suddenly, you catch a glimmer of light below

It is pleasing to your eye and you are drawn to it

You go to swim toward it

As you get nearer you notice that it is a treasure chest

With the lid slightly cracked

and a thin sheet of light gliding out

when you get up right next to it

the lid opens

and your eyes are drawn to the ceiling of the chest

you see a mirror

and you see your reflection

what do you look like?

You spot a small lavender, velvety bag at the bottom

you know that it is yours

it is meant for you

you reach in and lift it from the chest

you close the lid and turn to swim toward the surface

as you poke your head out you notice that you are still not far from the shore

so you swim toward it

you see the white frill appear at the end of the blue, the sand, and palm trees swaying

you come out of the water

you feel the rays of sunshine on your skin and the sand between your toes

you then turn and sit facing the sun  
that is dipping off into the edge of the sea  
you reach into the silky bag  
what is it?  
you smile  
it reminds you of your own worth and beauty  
the sun sets  
and while this day passes away  
you are filled with the promise of tomorrow



I can vividly remember as a small boy wading into the briskness the of the bay, getting to about my waist, breaking into a shiver, and then running back out again. Sometimes, I would just give up this little charade and come back and sit next to my dad on the towel. He would inevitably end up saying: “Don’t wade in boy, just go out to the end of the dock and jump off! Dive in, Dan, dive in!”

God calls us to get out of the shallows and go deep. From how we are individually *wired* to the nature/severity of various circumstances, different things can bring us to the jumping-off point at the end of the dock or edge of the pool. When we dive in faith into unknown waters, we dive into the outstretched arms of God. It is not the end, but the beginning of the journey.

Jesus ends the opening scriptural passage of this chapter with a dramatic and wondrous twist. The treasure we seek hidden in the deep may not be revealed to us in ways we always anticipate or hope, but in unexpected and surprising ways. So, while much of this study had to do with recovering what has been lost, let us also prepare for something altogether new – even an outright miracle!

So, what are you waiting for?

Dive in!

## **Chapter 6**

### **Unpacking the Treasure Chest: Event Evaluations**

As mentioned earlier, both the completed small group discussion forms and evaluations were placed in the toy treasure chests provided at the event. Following this, they were tucked away in my home office closet and sat there for several weeks. Then, over the summer, I took them out and re-opened the chests. I leafed through the forms and began to read and process through them. I also brought them to the post Soul Surfing Guide meetings to use as a basis for discussion along with whatever remaining thoughts they might have had. As it turned out, they had little to add to whatever they initially shared, which is also included below. If a number in parenthesis follows the response, this indicates the amount of times this, or a similar response, was given.

**Questions 1 and 2 regarding whether the subject matter was laid out clearly and the handouts helpful, every response said yes.**

#### **3. What was the most meaningful aspect of the program for you?**

“Creating structure for my vague sense of commonality between the twelve-steps and the Christian Churches.”

“The twelve-step group and church connection.” (5)

“Lecture provided a wealth of information – but not overwhelming.”

“Curious as to where Dan was going in the beginning, but could see later why he did what he did and tied it all together quite brilliantly.”

“Soul Surfing theme was interesting and effective.” (2)

“Liked your definition of recovery and spirituality and the connection between the two.”

“I got that this connection is not meant to be ecumenical or interfaith, but to create greater understanding and support between the two.”

“A twelve-step group is not a “self-help” group.”

“We are all addicted to something.”

“In the end, all we can do is call upon our higher power.”

“Meeting people from ‘in the rooms’. They are nice.”

“Not all Christians are hypocrites.”

“Splitting the Peak.” (3)

“I loved the Beach Boys/Dennis Wilson tie-in!” (2)

“I found the Dennis Wilson story to be very powerful and poignant.”

“Dan’s personal stories.”

“Understanding that I am broken helps me to be more accepting of those who are differently-broken than me.”

“The Soul Surfing Meditation at the end.”

“Small group discussion.” (3)

“The distinction and relationship between prayer and meditation.”

“Q & A.”

#### **4. What would have been more helpful for you?**

“You provided good solutions as to how the church and the twelve-step groups can better understand and support each other, but would be interested in exploring more.”

“More small group time.” (3)

“Quicker pace.” (2)

“It was long, but not sure what you could have been left out.”

**5. Would you be willing to take part in an event like this in the future?**

Yes (9)

Unsure (3)

Yes and no (1)

Maybe (1)

No (0)

**6. If answered “yes” to the above, what specific subject matter would you be interested in exploring more?**

“More focus on stigma.”

“The Opioid epidemic.”

“More focus on the offshoots of AA, like NA, Al-Anon, Alateen, etc.”

“Cross addictions.”

“Codependence.”

“The family and the addict.”

“Shame.”

“More on mental health.”

“Physiological aspects of addiction.”

“I wish I could just hear more about what Dan already covered!”

“What brings people to AA?”

“Helping the addicted on the fringe, the homeless, like on Skid Row.”

“Dealing with the pain of past church experiences.”

**7. What one thing did you learn from this event that you could apply in the future?**

“Not to be judgmental toward others”

“I feel more equipped to help others who suffer from addiction.”

“Progress not perfection.”

“Building on community.”

“Recovery is ongoing.”

“The church and the twelve-step movement are not all that different.”

“Look for similarities over differences.”

“I want to find out more about what is happening with the twelve-step groups at my church and how I can be more helpful.” (2)

“We cannot heal in isolation.”

“Further exploration as to how the church and AA can work together.”

“My addiction – anxiety – can be managed.”

“I want to be a soul surfer like Dan.”

“Explore how I can be part of creating common ground at my church for these two communities.”

“Your resources out on the table were helpful. I will keep them in my car.”

**8. Other comments?**

“Good presentation on the parallels on the church and the twelve-step movement!”

“Now, how about looking into how the twelve-step movement could relate to other religions, Islam, Buddhism, etc. ?”

“Very inspiring.”

“Great event. Glad I came.”

“Can you come to my church to do a talk like this?” (2)

“Can you do a workshop at synod assembly or one the youth gatherings?”

“Good job!”

### **Evaluation Summary**

Taking the evaluations, small group reflections and the post-meeting discussion I had with the “Soul Surfing Guides” into consideration, I have arrived at the following conclusions:

First and foremost, it is clear that the goal of bringing these two groups together for the sake of gaining a better understanding and support for each other was achieved. In fact, it seems like they couldn’t get enough of each other with all the clamoring about wanting to have more small group time! Admittedly, this came in part as a result of my presentation section going on too long and trying to get back on schedule. The small group time clearly could have (and should have) gone longer.

Otherwise, the other feedback was very positive, as reflected in both written and verbal responses. **The three-fold scope** that was presented at the beginning of this study blossomed into fruition: **Education** was provided and gratefully embraced; a steady flow of **communication** flowed throughout all stages of the project; and a **partnership** was forged, not so much on an individual basis, but the result of a summit of two peoples that discovered they are stronger together rather than in separation.

I also learned from this experience. As the old aphorism goes: “Pray like it all depends on God and work like it all depends on you.” I encountered a concentrated barrage of challenges over the course of this past spring/summer, that impacted all areas of my life. There were days it was difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel and all that was left for me to do was to walk

forward in faith. While there were times I was by disheartened by disappointment, I was also surprised by grace, as well. God came through.

As far as application goes, I found the responses to question 6 of the evaluation to be particularly helpful: Suggestions for future events focusing on topics such as co-dependence, the opioid epidemic, shame, duo diagnosis and cross addictions, are all very timely and crucially relevant. Among the list, I have already selected the topic of *shame* to lead a workshop for at next years' synod assembly and regional youth gathering.

It should be noted that a lot of what was presented in the study was not covered in the presentation. Likewise, there were things presented at the presentation that were not included in the study. Some of this was intentional while some of it was due to oversight. For example, one of the major clarifications I made during the presentation was that the twelve-step program is not a self-help group, but a divine-guided group. While this is eluded to throughout the study, this specific distinction was never explicitly stated. You will see it however, mentioned in the evaluation.

Finally, a few ideas emerged from my research that never made it to the light of day, either because it (or I) was not yet ready, or perhaps it would be better suited in a different medium. That said, I noticed at the end of the chapters of several of the books I referenced, that there were reflection questions and other exercises. If this project were to take such a direction in the future, I believe that this approach would really make for a more enriching experience by the reader.

“He said to them, ‘Therefore every teacher who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.’ Matthew 13: 52, BSB.



## Epilogue

### Thy Kokomo Come

Last month when I was driving my daughter, Maggie to school, she included a song on her playlist called: “The Greatest” by Lana Del Rey. The opening line went: “I miss Long Beach and I miss you babe/I miss dancing with you most of all/I miss the bar where the Beach Boys would go/Dennis' last stop before Kokomo.” I was stunned. I looked at her and said, “You do know that one line lays out the entire premise of my doctoral thesis, don’t you?” She slyly smiled back and said, “I do”.

“Kokomo” is a catchy little tune from The Beach Boys about a fictional tropical island paradise. It also suggests that it is a place that can be accessed by those who see through the eyes of the heart. I suppose, in the way that Del Rey referenced it, it was meant to symbolize the heavenly hereafter. My own theological orientation locates the Kingdom of God both where God entered human history in Jesus Christ, and secondly, when it reaches fullness or consummation at the end of time.

Much like “Kokomo”, the Kingdom of God is something that enters through the gates of the heart. It is not a geographical place as much as it is a spiritual one. Jesus encourages us to pray for God to bring about *heaven on earth*, both in the here-and-now and in the age to come (Mathew 6: 9-13). Sacramentally, this is symbolized and effectuated through Holy Baptism as we are joined in the death and resurrection of Christ. As soul surfers we take the daily plunge into the waters of our baptism in order to be re-cleansed in the Spirit and deepened in our faith.

Throughout this project, our own baptismal pilgrimage has brought us to the depths of our soul; where we turned back the tides of time; broke through rusted barriers; examined the subterranean ruins; and were taken into uncharted territory. We acknowledged our shared

brokenness and pain. We rejoiced in the gift of God's grace and the *steps* that can be taken in order to bring about wholeness and joy. Finally, we were invited to dive deeper, recognizing that we cannot stay in the shallows indefinitely, not if we wish to keep, cultivate and develop what we have.

In all of these realms, we have seen that there is a spiritual axiom that exists at the gate of each station or crossroads that calls us to *let go* – to release from *self* in order to provide a more complete and unobstructed capacity for a fuller awareness of God's presence and will along our faith journey. This is what it truly means to *live out our baptism*; to be daily buried and raised anew, resurfacing with the reentry of God's kingdom – and more able to recognize and bring out the hidden treasure buried deep within others.

Surf's up!

“The real voyage of discovery is not discovering new places, but in seeing with new eyes.” - Marcel Proust

## **Appendix A**

### **Promotion**

- Bishops Colloquy
- Save the Date!
- Synod Assembly 2-minute promo
- Lutheran Social Services
- Meeting with the Bishop
- Dean's Meeting
- Facebook Event Page
- Wendy Rubio, LSS
- Terri Robertson, Pacifica Synod Office
- Conference Dean
- Conference Meeting
- Synews
- Email
- Synod Assembly Report

Target Audience:

South Bay Conference

South Bay Treatment Professionals

## Appendix B

### Save the Date

# SAVE THE DATE!

## YOU ARE INVITED TO A SPECIAL ONE-NIGHT ENGAGEMENT ON SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2019!

Pastor Dan Gibson, a doctoral student at the Claremont School of Theology, will be presenting the project portion of his thesis, entitled: "Soul Surfing".

Targeting two populations, the church and the 12-step community, Pastor Dan will be inviting representatives from each group to "dive beneath the surface" in order to explore and identify the various myths and misconceptions that prevent us from better understanding and supporting each other.

Together we will uncover the "sunken treasures" buried within us that make us valuable to our communities and others in need.

This event will take place in Faith Hall, First Lutheran Church, Torrance, CA @ 7pm. All are welcome!

More information to come. Contact: Pastor Dan Gibson at [dwgibson61@gmail.com](mailto:dwgibson61@gmail.com).

## **Appendix C**

### **Preliminary General Checklist of Tasks**

- Secure locale (Faith Hall at First Lutheran, Torrance).
- Budget
- Sponsorship (The Recovery & Spirituality Task Force)
- Publicity
- Registration
- Audiovisual Aids
- Gather Resources
- Small Group Discussion Leaders
- Small Group Discussion Questions/Survey/Evals/Waver
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Hour Speaker
- Other Assistants
- Refreshments Committee
- Video stream/Video Taped

## Appendix D

### Soul Surfing Guides

#### *Overview*

My DMin research project is entitled “Soul Surfing”. The feature facet will be a one evening event that brings together representatives from the local churches and the 12-step communities in the South Bay area. The location will be First Lutheran Church in Torrance; the date will be June 15<sup>th</sup> and the times will be 7pm till 9pm. The program will include such things as a presentation and small group discussion.

#### *The main objectives will be:*

- I. To “dive beneath the surface” to explore our shared brokenness and shared need for God’s grace in our lives.
- II. To dispel some of the various myths that have influenced our attitudes toward the other (both personally and collectively).
- III. To gain a fresh appreciation of the other and consider how we might better understand and support each other.

#### *The 3 stages of this project*

- I. Pre-meeting meant for the gathering and formalization of the data criterion.
- II. The actual event itself that includes the distribution and collecting of data.
- III. The post-meeting, meant for the purpose of assimilating and assessing the data.

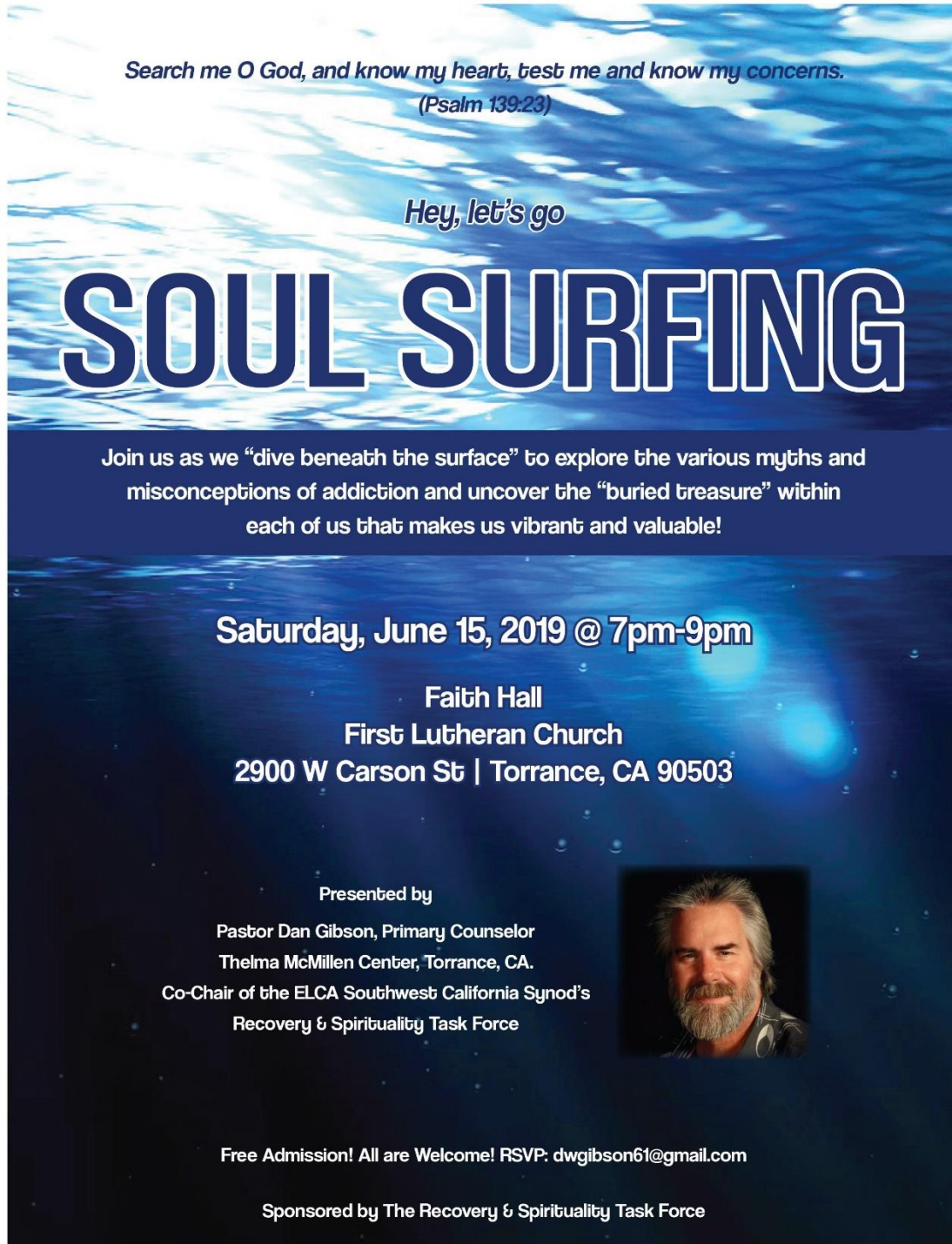
*In addition, some of you may be asked to serve as a small group leader or assist in other small capacity for the event itself.*

*In keeping with the standards of the 12-Step Traditions, it is appropriate for members to be engaged in various forms of public awareness. Such individuals are willing to disclose their membership for the sake of education and advocacy. Yet, while the second stage of this project includes a public event, no one is required to relinquish their right to their anonymity.*

Feel free to contact me at [dwgibson61@gmail.com](mailto:dwgibson61@gmail.com)

## Appendix E

### Main Flyer

The flyer has a background image of blue water with light reflecting off the surface. The text is arranged in a vertical layout. At the top, a Bible verse is quoted. Below it, a phrase 'Hey, let's go' is written in a script font. The main title 'SOUL SURFING' is in large, bold, blue-outlined letters. A paragraph of text follows, describing the event's theme. The date and time are listed next. The location is given in three lines. The presenter's name and title are listed, followed by a portrait photo of Pastor Dan Gibson. The event is free, and contact information is provided. The sponsor is listed at the bottom.

*Search me O God, and know my heart, test me and know my concerns.  
(Psalm 139:23)*

*Hey, let's go*


# SOUL SURFING

Join us as we “dive beneath the surface” to explore the various myths and misconceptions of addiction and uncover the “buried treasure” within each of us that makes us vibrant and valuable!

**Saturday, June 15, 2019 @ 7pm-9pm**

**Faith Hall  
First Lutheran Church  
2900 W Carson St | Torrance, CA 90503**

**Presented by**  
Pastor Dan Gibson, Primary Counselor  
Thelma McMillen Center, Torrance, CA.  
Co-Chair of the ELCA Southwest California Synod's  
Recovery & Spirituality Task Force



**Free Admission! All are Welcome! RSVP: [dwgibson61@gmail.com](mailto:dwgibson61@gmail.com)**

**Sponsored by The Recovery & Spirituality Task Force**



## **Appendix F**

### **Soul Surfing Agenda/Outline**

**Pastor Dan Gibson**

**6/15/19**

Welcome: Pastor Bill Hurst

Presentation: Soul Surfing: Pastor Dan Gibson

- Introduction
- What is a Soul Surfer?
- What Are We Drowning From?
- Catching the Wave of the Spirit
- Splitting the Peak (followed by small group discussion/large group feedback).
- Getting Out of the Shallows – Go Deep (Closing)

## **Appendix G**

### **Small Group Questionnaire**

1. Name at least one thing from the lecture that caught your attention.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Name at least one similarity and one difference between the church and the 12-step group that caught your attention.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Name at least one misconception that was cleared up for you, about your group or the other group?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What was not mentioned in the lecture about this topic or these groups that you would you like to point out?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What would you like to learn more about that relates to the church and/or the 12-Step movement?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Other comments?

## **Appendix H**

### **Evaluation**

1. Was the subject matter laid out clearly?
2. Were the handouts useful?
3. What was the most meaningful aspect of this program for you?
4. What would have been more helpful for you?
5. Would you be willing to take part in an event like this in the future?
6. If you answered “yes” to the above, what subject matter would you be interested in exploring more?
7. What one thing did you learn from this event that you could apply in the future?
8. Other comments?

## **Appendix I**

### ***Special thanks to:***

Hannah Blackmore, Drew Brooks, Pastor Melanie Martin-Dent, Dr. Andrew Dreitcer, Pastor Glen Egertson, Pastor Dave Ellingson, Pastor Lynn Enloe, Pastor Jim Fuller, Dr. Lincoln Galloway, Karlyn Gibson, Maggie Gibson, John Halbert, Pastor Nancy Hamm, Courtney Heimbuck, Joel Heimbuck, Samantha Henderson, Pastor Bill Hurst, Pastor PJ Holthus, Dr. Jack Jackson, Pastor Ken Johnson, Lynn Kimmel Johnson, Dr. Thomas Johnson, Michelle Keys, Deborah Langton, Marty Leveille, James Ludka, Dr. Duane Larson, Greg Lutz, Jim McShane, Beverly Miller, Karen Moyer, Bishop Emeritus Dean Nelson, Russell Noel, Jill Pless, Terri Robertson, Dr. Frank Rogers, Wendy Rubio, Deacon Shannon Savage Howie, Jim Sheehy, Susan Spadaro, Thom Spadaro, Walt Schulze, Mary Tabata, Charles Wake, Timothy Williams, Pastor Mark Witte, Lisa Wood, Nicolette Breski & Crew, First Lutheran Church, Torrance, Lutheran Social Services and the South Bay and Long Beach Conferences of the Southwest California Synod, ELCA.

## **Appendix J**

### **Alternative Non-traditional Methods to Recovery**

- Behavioral therapy
- Positive thinking
- Other religious expression – Buddhism
- Moderation Management

People with addiction problems have been shown to benefit from assertiveness training, behavior contracting, motivational therapies, behavior modification, and cognitive-behavioral approaches, to name a few...

### **Other Recovery Groups**

One of the *Soul Surfing Guides* suggested that I mentioned that AA or the twelve-step movement is not the only means of recovery. Although I mentioned a few during the presentation, here they are with a few I left out:

- Celebrate Recovery (Christian based)
- Women for Sobriety
- Jewish Alcoholics
- Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART)
- Secular Organizations for Sobriety
- Community-based spiritual fellowships

“Each river is different, but they all lead to the same sea.” – Anonymous

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